



CDC's Tuberculosis Epidemiologic Studies Consortium

WHAT IS THE HEALTH ISSUE?

In 2000, the Institute of Medicine Report on tuberculosis (TB) concluded that an aggressive strategy will be required to eliminate TB in the U.S. CDC's response noted a coordinated research plan is needed to maximize efficiency, ensure attention to highest priority activities, and avoid duplication of effort." To address this need, CDC established the Tuberculosis Epidemiologic Studies Consortium (TBESC) in September 2001.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

The TBESC is a national collaboration of tuberculosis researchers and includes the leading TB experts in the country. It consists of 22 sites across the United States and Canada, and includes academic institutions, public health departments, hospitals, and for-profit and non-profit organizations. The Consortium's mission is to conduct studies that are relevant to front-line TB programs in the areas of epidemiologic, behavioral, economic, and operational research. It also seeks to develop local health departments' capacity for independent research.

The TBESC is currently conducting 16 studies. These cover a wide range of topics, including but not limited to immune markers for susceptibility to TB; new diagnostic tests for TB and latent TB infection (LTBI); pediatric TB; incorporating HIV evaluation into contact investigation; prevalence of LTBI; regional capacity building; social network analysis; molecular epidemiology of multidrug-resistant TB; new surveillance evaluation; barriers to treatment adherence; educational materials for Hispanic community-based organizations; and TB program self-evaluation.

With its unique partnerships, structure, and infrastructure, the TBESC serves as a model for conducting multi-site studies in TB and other diseases. The consortium includes the following:

- A state-of-the-art web-based data management system for remote data entry.
- An e-room for TBESC-wide access to information via a web browser.
- External monitoring and quality assurance to ensure high-quality research.

Example of Program in Action:

Current TB programs were not designed to address the specific needs of foreign-born people, who now constitute the majority of persons with TB in the United States and Canada. Our most ambitious TBESC study will identify ways to speed up the diagnosis and treatment of TB in foreign-born people. TBESC staff members are interviewing a representative sample of about 1,500 foreign-born persons across the 22 TBESC sites. Staff are asking participants how long it took to get diagnosed, where they went for help, the problems they had getting care, and about their cultural and economic backgrounds. CDC will analyze this information in conjunction with information from the TB registries in each state and to the CDC immigration screening registry. The results will help improve TB policies and programs at the federal, state, and local levels.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC aims to efficiently translate results from this research and apply them to improve TB prevention and control. CDC will continue to seek opportunities for collaborations to leverage our efforts.